

Evening Chat

Forty-eight counties in West Virginia employed convicts in building and repairing roads during the year ending June, 1915. The Hon. A. D. Williams, director of the State Highway Department of West Virginia has forwarded to the National Committee on Prisons pictures which show the remarkable accomplishment of these county prisoners. An honor prisoner is shown in one picture standing beside a wall that he erected in Kanawha County at a cost of only \$1.15 per cubic yard.

The pictures also show a prison camp half a mile below Kimball, with a portable jail in the center and a prisoner driving; also prisoners opening up a new quarry and a stretch of country road two miles above Welch along the Tug river which the prisoners cut through a solid cliff.

The National Committee on Prisons has published some of the West Virginia road pictures in an illustrated pamphlet just issued. The pamphlet takes up the various phases of prison work which the committee is carrying on. The West Virginia road work is the result of legislation prepared by the National Committee on Prisons and is successful because of the co-ordination of the State Highway and prison departments, which the committee holds essential to the right development of convict road work.

County Engineer W. G. MacLaren of McDowell County states that "out of the large number of prisoners in McDowell County which have been working upon the county roads only a small number have ever been in a jail a second time. Prior to working on the roads we had a number of repeaters."

When the idleness in most county jails is considered the importance of the West Virginia road work is realized, while the fact that the road-making convicts are under state control is a step towards bringing the county jails themselves under the control of the state prison authorities.

In Marion county practically all of the county prisoners that are able have been employed on the roads this summer. Under the direct supervision of deputy Thos. Bambridge a gang of prisoners ranging in number from eight or ten to sometimes twenty have effectively repaired the worst dirt roads. Most of the prisoners employed on such work have been Yost law violators. Thus the labor of the men partly pays the expense connected with their trial and board while serving sentence.

Many local swimmers have more or less trouble with water in their ears and one or two instances have been recorded where serious injury of the ears of persons swimming in the Monongahela river or other places.

An epidemic of ear infection is now in progress at most all of the Lake bathing beaches and the Health Commissioner of Chicago recently warned all bathers to plug their ears with vaseline greased cotton before entering the water.

This cotton greased with vaseline positively prevents the dirty water entering the ear and reduces the chance of infection of the sensitive ear tissues to the minimum. This suggestion might well be taken by Fairmonters who frequent the local bathing places.

THE NATION IS SHOCKINGLY UNPREPARED.

It is apparent that we are shockingly unprepared. There is no room for controversy on this point since the object lesson on the Mexican border. All our available regular troops (less, I believe, than 40,000) are there or in Mexico, and as these have been deemed insufficient the entire National Guard has been ordered out; that is, we are summoning practically all our movable military forces in order to present bandit incursions. In view of the warnings of the past three years, it is inexcusable that we should find ourselves in this plight. For our faithful guardians, who with a fine patriotism responded to this call and are bearing this burden, I have nothing but praise. But I think it little short of absurd that we should be compelled to call men from their shops, their factories, their offices and their professions for such a purpose. This, however, is not all. The units of the National Guard were at peace strength, which was only about one-half the required strength. It was necessary to bring in recruits for the most part raw and untrained. Only a small percentage of the regiments recruited up to war strength will have had even a year's training in the National Guard, which at the maximum means one hundred hours of military drill, and, on the average, means much less. Men fresh from their peaceful employments and physically unprepared have been hurried to the border for actual service. They were without proper equipment; without necessary supplies; suitable conditions of transportation were not provided. Men with dependent families were sent; and conditions which should have been well known were discovered after the event. And yet the emergency, comparatively speaking, was not a very grave one. It involved nothing that could not readily have been foreseen during the past three years of disturbance, and required only a modest talent for organization. That this Administration while pursuing its course in Mexico should have permitted such conditions to exist is almost incredible. From Mr. Hughes' speech of acceptance.

WHO'S GUILTY?

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by MRS. WILSON WOODROW

AUTHOR OF "THE SILVER BUTTERFLY,"
"SALLY SALT," "THE BLACK PEARL," ETC
NOVELIZED FROM THE SERIES OF PHOTOPLAYS OF
THE SAME NAME RELEASED BY PATHE EXCHANGE.

SEVENTH STORY

Truth Crushed to Earth.

The champion, sword in hand, was defending his lady love from the murderous attack of the dragon.

The group of nurses lounging on the park bench saw only five-year-old Tommy Blake and four-year-old Marjorie Lampson, playing, with a very big and very friendly collicie. But Tom, my, the champion, knew better. He knew the dragon would surely swallow Marjorie and drag her away to its lair, unless her defender could frighten away the monster with his sword.

So while Marjorie squealed with delight, Tom wielded the wooden sword right doughtily, shaking it in front of the barking collicie's nose and assuring his little playmate he would save her.

It was a wonderful game. But presently the collicie tired of it and trotted away. Tommy (thrilled at the triumphant thought that he had vanquished the dragon) gave chase. He had not run three steps before his foot slipped and he tumbled face downward in a very large and very sloppy mudpuddle.

The nurse swooped down upon him and dragged him homeward. Mrs. Blake was at this moment engaged in preparing an address which she expected to read two nights later before the Parents' club.

A shutting door, a sound of weeping, the hurry of footsteps checked her flow of inspiration. She laid down her pen and turned with a frown toward the library doorway.

On the threshold appeared the nurse half leading, half dragging the fearful and muddy child. At sight of the havoc wrought on Tommy's new suit Mrs. Blake called in sudden loss of temper:

"You had, bad boy! See what you've done! You ought to be whipped and sent to bed! How did this happen?"

"Why, you see, ma'am," began the nurse, "he was—"

"I asked Master Tommy not you, nurse," interrupted the vexed mother. "Tommy, tell me how this happened! Tell me the truth, mind you, or I'll—"

"It—it was this way," faltered Tommy, manfully choking back his sobs. "I was playing S'nt George and the Dragon. And Marjorie was being the Maiden in Distress—like—like the way you read to me. And Laddie was the dragon. And I made him run away. And I chased him. And I fell down and got all muddy up. And I'm awful sorry, mamma. I didn't mean to fall down. And—"

Mrs. Blake interrupted his pitiful defense by catching his shoulder in her strong hand and jerking him along in her wake as she marched across to the library book closet and locked Tommy in.

Tom Blake had reached the mature age of eleven. Marjorie Lampson and her brother, Harry, had come one afternoon to the Blake house to talk over a matter of tremendous import to all three of them—no less an event than Tom's birthday party which was to take place on the following week.

"Say! Tom greeted them. 'I'm going to have a bicycle for my birthday! Honest I am!'"

"No!" exclaimed Harry Lampson in open-eyed envy.

"Yes, I am, too. Papa says I am. Isn't that grand?"

"Isn't it wonderful that you're going to have a bicycle?" laughed Marjorie in delight. "I'm going to ask papa to get me one, too. Then we can take rides together."

"Huh!" grunted Harry in derision. "You're too much of a cry-baby to ride a bicycle, Marge. You'd snivel every time you fell off."

"Leave her be," commanded Tom. "If you don't like it—"

Harry showed his disregard for the warning by giving Marjorie's curls a sharp tug. The little girl cried out in pain. With a yell of fury Tom launched himself on her tormenter.

Around the library table dashed the pursuer and the pursued. Harry dodged as Tom caught up with him and ducked under the latter's outflung arm.

Tom's fist, missing its mark, struck full against the side of an antique cloisonne vase that stood at one end of the table. The vase—worth its weight in gold—was the pride of Mr. Blake's heart.

At the impact of Tom Blake's fist the vase flew into the air, crashed down upon the hardwood floor and lay there, smashed into fragments.

Mr. Blake, drawn thither by the crash, sauntered into the library in housecoat and slippers. There on the floor lay his priceless vase in atoms. "Who did that?" he demanded, pointing dramatically at the ruined vase.

"I did, sir!" said Tom. "I was chasing—"

He got no further. His father

kicked off one slipper, picked it up, caught the wretched boy by the nap of the neck, flung him over the paternal knee and began to rain blows upon him with the full force of a vigorous and anger-driven arm.

At last the ordeal was over. Mr. Blake shoved the tortured boy away from him and stamped out of the room. Marjorie ran up to Tom and caught his pain-clenched hands in hers.

"Tom!" she wailed. "Oh, Tom! You poor, poor boy! I'm so sorry! But why did you tell him it was you that broke the vase? Why didn't you say it was Harry?"

"I—I had to tell him the truth," panted the boy. "There wasn't anything else to do."

From the days when he had defended her from the collicie-dragon, Tom Blake had loved Marjorie Lampson.

And now, at twenty-one, it was no longer the affection of a child for a child, but the whole-souled adoration of a man for a woman.

And one evening he told her so. It was during his senior year at the university. He had but three months more to study. After graduation he was to go into business with his father.

He and Harry Lampson were in the same class at the university. But their childhood acquaintance had not ripened into friendship.

It was on the evening after his father had promised to take him into the business that Tom called on Marjorie with the good news.

"And, dear," said Tom, after a half hour of the delicious idiosyncies that lovers consider such infinitely wise conversation. "It won't have to be a long engagement, either. Father promised me today that he—"

Marjorie dated away from the clasp of his arm.

"Dad's coming in," she warned him. "I heard his key in the front door. I know he won't approve. Don't let's tell him—yet."

"Why, little sweetheart!" Tom reassured her. "He won't bite us. Besides, it's the only square thing—the only truthful thing—to do. We can't live a lie. He has the right to know."

"But—"

Mr. Lampson hearing voices in the living room, strolled in. Harry, at his heels, caught sight of Tom and halted irresolute, just outside the doorway.

"Good evening, Tom," Mr. Lampson greeted the caller, not over cordially.

"Mr. Lampson," spoke up Tom, nervously himself for the ordeal. "My father promised today to take me into the business with him in June."

"I congratulate you," said Lampson perfunctorily.

"That will mean," went on Tom, "that I'll have good pay from the start; with a prospect of a raise as soon as I make good. And I'm going to make good. Not only for father's sake and mine, but for Marjorie's, too."

"Marjorie's?" repeated Lampson in mild displeasure. "What has Marjorie to do with it?"

"I hope she will have everything to do with it," answered Tom.

"I don't understand you."

"Mr. Lampson," said Tom. "I have just asked Marjorie to be my wife. Will you make us both very happy by giving your consent? If you will let us marry as soon as I go to work—"

"I am afraid I cannot consent to anything of the sort," said Lampson, stiffly. "I—"

"But Mr. Lampson! You know all about me. You know my parents. You know Marjorie cares for me, that I shall be able to support her, that—"

"I do not care to go into that question at all," said Lampson. "It is enough for me to say that I cannot sanction any engagement between you and my daughter."

"That means," flashed Marjorie, "that you've been listening to more of Harry's stories about him. Harry's jealous of Tom, because Tom is popular and—"

"That will do, Marjorie!" said her father. "I don't care to discuss the matter. I positively forbid the engagement. And I forbid you to see Tom again, for the present."

"Mr. Lampson!" broke out Tom, "this is unfair. If you have any objection to me, it is only honest to tell me what it is. I—"

"I am not compelled to explain my motives to every scatter-brained college boy," said Lampson. "My daughter is not yet of age, and is therefore subject to my wishes. I forbid her to see you again. And I forbid you to call here. Good night."

Tom stalked angrily out of the room.

When he came home from college next afternoon—he lived only about a mile from the university—Tom found waiting for him a letter from Marjorie. Eagerly he opened it and read:

Sweetheart—Dad is still terribly angry. He threatens to shut me up in the house or send me to boarding school or even to a convent if ever I dare speak to you. You see, he can't stand having people talk back to him as you did last night. And it's made him all the more bitter against you. (He'd be the same way, I'm sure, with anyone who tried to marry me and take me away from him.) But I'm not going to give you up, Tom.

I'd lots rather see you with his consent. But I'm going to see you just the same, even without his consent. Is that wrong? I hope not, because I'm going to, anyway. And besides, you gave him fair warning.

I'm going to slip out of the house for a few minutes after dinner this evening. Would you care to meet me? If you would I'll be at the college drug store at about eight. All yours.

MARJORIE.

Promptly at 8 Tom reached the College drug store. He glanced inside. Marjorie was not there yet. But a half dozen youths from the university were gathered at a counter, laughing noisily over something. Harry Lampson was among them.

Before Tom could withdraw one of the lads hailed him, calling:

"Look here! See what we've got." He held up for inspection a sign-board on whose black surface was chalked in white the word "Under-taker."

"We're going to hang it under Dr. Lentz's shingle, around the corner," yonder," explained the youth. "The old guy will be sore as blazes when he sees it in the morning."

Tom nodded and turned away. The boys, with their sign, presently trooped out. Tom waited a minute or so longer, then left the store. He came face to face with Marjorie who was entering.

An uproar a half block below brought them to an abrupt halt. They turned to locate the turmoil.

A hundred feet away, under the glare of an electric light, a knot of six or seven people were engaged in a decidedly lively tussle. One of the group was a policeman. Tom, at a glance, understood the situation.

"They were going to hang an undertaker's sign under Dr. Lentz's name," he explained to Marjorie, "and that cop must have caught them at it and tried to run them in. They're beating him up, the idiots! That'll mean a night in the 'hoosegow' for some of them. They—"

"Tom!" she cried, shrilly. "Oh, Tom! One of them is Harry!" He's

at a meeting of the faculty that afternoon Tom Blake was duly and publicly expelled from the university.

He himself brought home the news. His mother burst into a flood of tears. His father, as stirred as she, took the matter more stoically.

"Here!" he said, curtly. "Take this money. It is \$100. Take it and get

out. I don't want a black sheep in my fold. You have made your bed. Lie in it. I'm done with you."

"But, Father!" persisted Tom. "I've done nothing wrong. I'm innocent."

"They don't expel innocent boys from college," retorted his father.

While Tom was miserably packing his few belongings a note was delivered to him. It was from Marjorie. Tom read:

Dearest—I'm a coward, and I don't suppose you can ever forgive me. But you don't know what Dad is, when he's in one of his rages. There is nothing he wouldn't do if he found out I'd disobeyed him. I couldn't help you, Tom. I just couldn't. But there's something I can do. And I've done it. Uncle Roger was my god-father, and he loves me better than anyone else. I've just been to him and told him the whole story.

He was splendid about it. He said: 'I'll help you both out. Send Tom Blake to me and I'll give him a chance in my own office. Since you believe in him, so will I. And in a year you'll be of age. Then you can marry anyone you want to. By that time, if he's any good, he'll be making a marrying salary. Tell him to come and see me tomorrow. Please go to him, Tom. It's our one chance—Heartbrokenly.

"P. S.—I love you."

The next year was one of tireless work and steady achievement for Tom Blake. He more than justified the "chance" that Roger Lampson gave him by bringing to his new job a restless energy, enthusiasm and adaptability that quickly won his employer's approval.

"I thought I was doing you a favor, Marjorie," Roger Lampson said to the girl one day, "by hiring young Blake. But it was you who did me a favor by getting me such a man to work for me. He's had two promotions this past year. And he's going to get a third and bigger raise next month."

"Next month?" echoed Marjorie. "Why, that's June. The month of weddings."

"And the month of your birthday," supplemented her uncle. "You'll be of age the first of June, won't you?"

Marjorie, seeing her lover's plight, ran across the street to his rescue. Before she could reach him Harry darted out of the shadows and caught hold of her hand.

"Come away from this!" he said, harshly, "and come quick! I'm not going to have my sister mixed up in a police court case!" "If you don't come, I'll tell Dad you were with Tom Blake after you'd been ordered not to. And you can figure out for yourself what Dad will do, then."

Weeping, she surrendered; fear overcoming loyalty.

The university town's two morning papers next day contained lurid accounts of what they termed "a student riot," and they added the information that Thomas Cowperthwaite

Blake, a senior at the university, had been the ringleader and had been arrested for assaulting Officer Hutch.

When Tom, after a hideous scene at home, went to the university he found a summons to report at once at the office of the institution's president. To the president's displeased inquiries, Tom merely said:

"I had nothing to do with the fight. I was on the other side of the street when I first saw it. I tried to get an acquaintance out of danger. And, in the scrimmage, I was caught and arrested. I give you my word I had no part in any of the rest of it."

"If you are really innocent you probably have witnesses to prove it. You say you were on the other side of the street when you first saw the fight. Were you alone?"

"No, sir."

"Then surely the person or persons with you can prove your innocence."

"Yes, sir, if necessary. Though I don't like to bring her into this, I was with a lady. If you will let me go into your telephone booth there and call her up, I will tell her you wish to ask her a few questions over the phone."

Tom entered the office booth and called up the Lampson home. Marjorie herself answered the ring. In a few hurried words he explained the situation.

"But, Tom!" came the quivering reply over the wire. "I can't, dear. I can't! The president knows Dad. He'd be certain to mention it to him. And then I'd be in awful trouble. That's why I didn't interfere last night. Harry threatened to tell Dad I was with you. And—"

"All right, sweetheart," said Tom gently. "Don't be frightened. I'm not worth it. I'll manage somehow without your testimony."

He returned to the president. "I regret, sir," said Tom. "That my witness cannot testify. But I have given you my word of honor that I—"

"That will do," the president cut him short. "Good day."

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"And the month of your birthday," supplemented her uncle. "You'll be of age the first of June, won't you?"

Well, take my advice—marry Tom Blake that day. And I'll make you peace with your father afterward."

Marjorie sped to Tom with this inspired suggestion. And the wedding date was accordingly fixed for June 1.

Tom, aglow with delight at the prospect, and at the promise of a raise in pay, hurried back to the office after his lunchtime chat with Marjorie.

It was a busy day, and, during the afternoon a detail of work arrived that had to be completed in haste. Tom at once volunteered to stay after hours to finish it.

As he at last laid aside the completed task and reached for his hat and coat he heard a rap at the door of the outer office. Answering the summons he admitted James Sullivan, a customer of the firm.

"Hello, Blake," the visitor greeted him, pulling a wallet from his pocket. "I sold my old car this evening for \$850. Here it is. In fifties. Please ask Lampson to keep it on deposit here till I get back to town."

"But," objected Tom, "only Mr. Lampson and the cashier have the combination of the safe. What shall I do with this overnight? Where shall I put it?"

"Oh, just take personal care of it," suggested Sullivan.

He was gone, leaving Tom looking down perplexedly at the fifty-dollar bills in his hand. Tom, after a moment's thought, went to the telephone and called up Roger Lampson at the latter's house, telling his employer of Sullivan's deposit.

"Put it somewhere for the night," replied Lampson, "and turn it over to the cashier in the morning. Thanks, just the same, for calling me up to let me know."

Tom opened a drawer of his desk; then reconsidered, and decided the money would be safer in his own keeping. Office thefts were not uncommon and there was always the danger of fire.

So he took out a long envelope, wrote his name and the firm's address on it, put the money in the envelope, sealed it and placed it in the inside pocket of his vest. Then he locked the office and went out into the street.

The hour was late and he was sleepy as well as hungry, so he took a short cut through a network of squalid streets to bring him to his own boarding place. He had gone only a few blocks when he noticed on a curtained street window the sign:

"Harding's cafe."

The window was not over-clean and the street was uninviting. But hunger is seldom fastidious.

Choosing a meal from the list displayed on the greasy and much-thumbed menu, he gave his order and sat back to wait.

Lizzie Reisen was a lady who lived by her wits. And she had good sharp wits to live by. She did not care for her patronyme, and early in her hectic career she had changed it to "Luzette Fortescue." But an unappreciative police force had renamed her "Light-Fingered Liz."

Liz entered the main room of the cafe and glanced around with a seeming carelessness which, none the less, took in every detail and every patron of the place. Her roving glance at last paused—at sight of something that promised to be interesting.

At an alcove table sat a well-dressed young man in front of whom a waiter was just then setting a cup of coffee.

As the waiter leaned over him, Liz saw the young man raise his hand nervously toward one side of his vest.

That tip was quite enough for Light-Fingered Liz. She crossed to the alcove.

"Pardon me," she said, politely. "Do you mind if I sit here? The outer room is so smoky."

"Not at all," said Tom absently. The girl picked up the menu and studied it. But her fingers seemed to be awkward. For she let the greasy card fall to the floor. It struck near Tom's feet. He stooped to pick it up.

During the fraction of a second that his head was below the table edge, Liz's hand shot forward with unbelievable swiftness, dropped something into the cup of coffee and returned as quickly to her own lap.

Tom Blake was aware of a racking headache, a rankly bad taste in his mouth, a sense of nausea. He sat up and blinked. He—yes, he must have been fast asleep.

His watch was gone. So was his chain. And his vest was unbuttoned. His fingers flew to the inside pocket. It was empty.

A gurgling cry, like that which is wrung from the dying, burst from Tom's dry lips.

What was to be done? And, from long habit, conscience answered: "Tell the truth!" But his cooler judgment realized that in the present case the truth was the one thing he could not tell.

"All my life," he muttered to himself in sick resentment, "I've told the truth. And all my life I've gotten into trouble by doing it. Here goes for my first lie!"

Retracing his steps, he made for the office and stealthily left himself in with his key. Going straight to his own desk, he locked every drawer in it; then, with a chisel broke all the locks.

After which he strewed papers about the floor and left the top drawer wide open. He performed the same feat with three other desks. Then he went home, leaving the office outer door unlocked.